

MUSIC AS A CAREER FOR GIRLS

By Marion M. Scott



There is a good deal of easy talk at the present day about "choosing Music" as a profession. It would be more to the point if girls ascertained whether Music had first chosen them. In other words the artistic gift must be so strongly marked that Music is a vocation as well as a career. This is universally true, but it is apparently more necessary to bring it to the notice of girls than of men, because a high percentage of the former persist in entering the profession each year on only a slender aptitude. If one excepts the stage, the Films and novel writing no other profession appears to offer such exciting and romantic opportunities. In prospect it is enchanting: in proof, often more than hard. For Music is essentially a whole time job, competition is keen and the rewards are comparatively few. It is not even unknown that a fine player has been reduced to playing in the streets for a livelihood. These factors in the situation may be taken as constant. Further some new elements have lately come into the profession which have so disturbed its working equilibrium that to forecast the future is more than difficult. When Maryas and Apollo, in the old world myth, had their famous contest between flute and lyre, the spectators were probably hugely puzzled over the probable out-

come. That legend is the story of the first aesthetic crisis, when the single line of pure melody was pitted against the resources of harmony, and two orders of music, the old and the new stood face to face. Today, without being wholly aware of it, we are watching a similar drama. The old order of musical organization, in which performance depended exclusively on the personal presence of artists and audience, has been shaken to its foundations by the introduction of Gramophones, where an artists single performance is reproduced mechanically many thousand times and by Radio where a single performance is sent out simultaneously to many thousand absent people. In the old myth Apollo, the better man, won. What may happen now is impossible to predict, since Apollo is confronted with a giant double of himself. Ultimately the menace may prove no more than a Brocken Spectre - a temporary illusion cast upon the misty future, but at the moment musicians are puzzled. Twenty years ago or twenty years ahead, advice would be easier. Only one thing remains a rock certainty - unless a girl is highly gifted with music she ought resolutely to remain an amateur.

Genius is rare. If a girl possesses it she can hardly remain unaware of her tremendous impulse towards its expression. But talent is a more frequent and perplexing occurrence. It will be wise for any girl wishing to make Music her career to seek the advice of one or two disinterested and well qualified professional musicians. For the sake of experience and to measure her attainments against those of other people it is also quite

useful to enter for some standard examination, such as those conducted by the Royal Academy of Music and the Royal College of Music.

It cannot be sufficiently insisted upon that a child's training should be ^{of} the best from ~~the~~ beginning to end. Second rate teaching and wrong methods waste time and money. No one has really time to go wrong and unlearn faults. If a girl is to be successful as a player she ought to begin studying her instrument when she is about six or seven, certainly before she is ten so that her hands still have their baby flexibility. A singer, on the contrary, ought not to attempt regular voice training till she is about eighteen, at which age the voice settles though even then it does not really set till she is about 21. So it is a mistake to let a girl work her voice before she is eighteen though if she chooses to sing about the house for amusement well and good. What she should work at, in the years while her voice lies fallow, is her general knowledge of music. This will save time when she gets to vocal study and will prepare her for what she has to do later still when she enters the profession. A voice is not enough. There must be musicianship with it. In some ways a singer's life is easier than that of an instrumentalist. From the nature of the case, a singer cannot practice so many hours as are required from an instrumentalist. On the other hand the instrumentalists begin their careers earlier and continue them longer than the average singer, though there are wonderful exceptions like Patti and Melba.

where the voices seem independent of age. But these wonderful exceptions only occur when singers possess an absolutely perfect method of voice production

Formerly there were few facilities for Musical study. Nowadays there are plenty, and an ever increasing number of Scholarships, Exhibitions and loan funds to help needy scholars. The great Training centres of the Royal Academy of Music and the Royal College of Music in London have become Meccas for students from all over the Empire. The Guildhall School of Music in London, the Midland Institute in Birmingham, and the Royal Victoria College of Music in Manchester also offer excellent tuition. Good musical facilities are also obtainable in the Universities and many schools, not to mention the smaller Music Schools and the private teachers though generally speaking students come on from these to complete their training at one of the great London centres. There is something in this corporate musical existence which corresponds to the "atmosphere" of University life, and it widens a student's whole musical outlook. But individual, private and intensive study are also good. Many students go abroad for a time to famous foreign teachers after completing their English studies. This helps to widen their mental horizon.

In the immediate sense musical training means years of hard work, grit and constancy. In the ultimate sense, it is never over, for after tutorial guidance has ceased artists must continue to train themselves. Girls should be specially careful

to remind themselves of this, unless they be content to let their careers corroborate the remark of a famous Pianoforte teacher who once said that while his pupils were with him he found no difference in ability and progress between men and women, but that if pupils returned to him after three years of professional work by themselves he found that the men had progressed while the women had remained at the same stage of artistic development as when they left him. This is only a half truth: some exceptional women develop all through their lives. But it is well to remember and guard against that half truth if one wishes to prove it untrue. Too many women have been content to rest on their ^{early} laurels.

To turn now from training to music as a career. What are the chances and conditions for work. Broadly speaking there are two fields: the first which includes the frequently needed branches of professional work, such as singing, Pianoforte, Violin, Viola, Violoncello, etc. The second which includes all the infrequent types where there are either few openings or where the opportunities for women are restricted. This class includes all wind instruments, organ, drums, etc, and what one may call the specialist jobs of composer, conductor, writer on Music, Lecturer, Music Publisher, Concert Agent etc. It is at this point, impartially surveying all the facts that one suddenly discovers the great law of compensation. If Gramophones, Piano Players and Broadcasting have made inroads upon ordinary concert work, they have also opened new paths to success and new

sources of revenue. Between fees, retaining fees, and royalties musicians whose records are favourites with the public earn substantial sums. The many stations and long daily programmes of the British Broadcasting Corporation require the services of a number of artists and though fees naturally vary the work is conducted on business lines. Not every singer or player is successful. Gramophone and Radio both require good technique and personality plus a special aptitude for adjusting the performance to the actual conditions. This is particularly true of Broadcasting where a whole new technique is only just coming to be understood. For example, one effect of Radio transmission is to magnify every defect in performance; faulty voice production or bad diction of a singer, uneven finger work or hard tone in a pianist are mercilessly shown up. Faults that might even escape attention on a concert platform are apparent over the Radio. There is also the question of personality - some people "come over" well, others do not. Sincerity, Concentration the Imagination, and sympathy are essential for really successful Broadcaster.

To turn now to some nutshell reviews.

Singing The girl who possesses a fine voice starts with her career unmistakable indicated. If she is also fortunate enough to have real musical instinct she has two out of the four things needful for success. The other two are strength of character and good health. People who have not watched the evolution of artists but especially



can hardly realize how much these things mean to all artists, but especially to singers where the vocalist is in a sense her own instrument. Strength of character is requisite to face the discouragements, temptations and difficulties of public work - especially those connected with the stage (where occasions arise when an apparent path to success is not the wise one to take) - and good health is needed to withstand the strain of late hours, long rehearsals, trying journeys and excitement. It may be argued that if a girl specializes upon teaching instead of public work these difficulties are lessened, but they are not eliminated, for comparatively few teachers have their work all under one roof (either in Studio or School) while the majority have to build up teaching connections in different places to keep themselves going. Besides few teachers can be successful who have not had a touch of public work themselves.

Opera naturally offers the most interesting type of work. It demands a knowledge of acting, languages, dancing, and fencing as well as singing. But opportunities for engagements are few in Britain. The British National Opera Company, the Carl Rosa, Moody Manners and D'Oyly Carte Touring Companies and "the Old Vic" are the principal semi permanent organisations where young artists might look for work. There is also some work to be had in occasional runs of single Operas ("The Immortal Hour" or the "Beggars' Opera" for example) and Musical Comedy still exists. Grand Opera at Covent Garden is



largely in the hands of foreign artists. They are there not so much because they are foreign as because they are tremendously well qualified. They take their art very seriously studying it from ~~every~~ every angle. A few British singers have had big successes abroad - (for example Marguerite Sheridan in Italy and Florence Easton in America) - but in the first instance they have to overcome the foreign belief that "English music is no music" and then to hold their own against cosmopolitan competition. America wants the best of everything, and is willing to pay well, and sees that she gets what she pays for.

Concert work is not as good as it used to be, though provincial Festivals and Choral Societies offer a fairly steady average of concerts, and the Federation of Music Clubs is helping to widen opportunities for Chamber Concert work. Engagements for Private Concerts and "At Homes" are also fewer than before the War. Concert giving is a most unremunerative business unless an artist is a well known favourite with the public. Yet many artists feel that for the sake of publicity and press notices (which may help them when building up a provincial connection) - they must give concerts. Some go to accredited concert agents to make the arrangements others do the work themselves. There is also a Society called The Guild of Singers and Players by which two or three artists can club together to share the expenses of concert giving. Broadcasting Concerts offer good opportunities, and



the variety stage affords scope for certain lines of talent. Hotels, Restaurants, and big shops also go in now for music and though these engagements have not the prestige of regular Opera or Concert work, the musical standard is not bad and they are a very present help for people who have to earn their own living. Resident teaching posts, except in big institutions, are rarely for singing alone. Schools usually expect the Pianoforte or Violin Mistress to be qualified to teach singing and train the School Choir, or vice versa.

Pianoforte To be a great solo pianist with international fame and the pick of concert work is given to but few. A few other women find their niche in first rate ensemble organizations, while rather more make their way as accompanists - a job in which a woman's quickness of uptake and sympathy are very useful. But the majority have to earn their living in Cinema, Hotel and Restaurant work, or by teaching. Cinema work is rather a strain, with duty 6 days a week, and hours approximately from 3 or 3-30 to 10-45, Orchestral, or from 2 or 2-30 to 9 or 9-30 solo, though with rest intervals, of course. Salaries range from about £2.15 to £6 a week - or even £8 in rare cases. There are regular Agents for this type of work who charge commission on appointments secured, and the "Era" is the favourite advertising medium. Auditions are general, and on the whole girls are given an equal chance with men, though in some Cinemas men only are employed. The drawbacks too are fewer than in stage work. A girl may be employed



either as one of an ensemble or Orchestra, or as a solo (Relief) Pianist. For Orchestral work first class technique good sight reading, rhythm and accuracy and ability to follow the leader are essential. In solo (relief) work the pianist must fit every scene with suitable music, and in comedies is expected to keep the music rhythmical, bright, and right up to date in jazz. There are regular agencies for Restaurant and Hotel work, but frequently the engagements pass from hand to hand without coming into the market. Hotel work can be quite pleasant, particularly if several congenial girls get together on a job. Many big Hotels and Hydros in charming seaside or country resorts require music and girls can get quite a good holiday, with adequate accomodation and steady pay by taking one of these jobs. Restaurant work is generally more arduous, and the conditions seem to foster petty gossip and ill feeling Teaching is a good stand-by, but it is an exciting branch of the profession, particularly as (very rightly) teachers must be registered and must pass certain standard examinations to qualify for this Registration, which is applicable to all music. Schools posts may be resident or non-resident, generally speaking the salaries are not magnificent. Some resident posts even begin at the shockingly small figure on which the Vicar of Wakefield was "passing rich" £40 a year, but others are well paid. In the Dominions salaries are usually good; however the higher cost of living frequently puts the net result on a par



with Britain. In proportion there are more good posts in Britain than in the Dominions.

Private teaching is more precarious while the teaching connection is being built up, but it leaves a girl more freedom to pursue other musical work.

Organists ^{lines} Practically only two ~~branches~~ of work are open to women organists - Churches or Cinemas. Of the two Cinemas pay better as a rule, for Organist posts. ^{An average} ~~in any case~~ Organist's salary is a very modest affair. In any case all the best Church posts are filled by men and likely to remain so. If a girl does wish to become a Church organist she must certainly study Choir training.

Violinists Only a few girls possess genius and attain the highest eminence as violinists, with international fame and big fees. But there are many very fine players who fall just below international standard, besides hosts of capable fiddlers, so the profession is pretty full. Ensemble playing requires a special type of ability which does not always go with the temperament for solo work, and some women Quartet leaders and String Quartet organizations have made a big name for themselves. This team work is altruistic for members of ensemble parties cannot get the big fees of soloists. Orchestral work does not offer the same good prospects as it did during the war. Only one first class orchestra (The New Queen's Hall) now employs women equally with men. The others exclude girls, except as harpists - they are admitted presumably because good men harpists are scarce.



Nor do Theatre orchestras employ women now. Further if a girl hopes to get any orchestral work she is almost bound to join the Musicians Union, which is run on Trades Union lines, and the chances of her getting work are not assured as competition is keen. Still, there is a little work for really experienced players. A capacity for reading well at sight is absolutely necessary to a string player and a knowledge of conducting is often useful. Otherwise almost everything that has been said of Cinema Broadcasting, Restaurant and Hotel work applies equally to Violinists and cellists..

Viola Good Viola players are scarce, so they are likely to find ensemble and orchestral work rather more readily than violinists. In the early stages a girl should train on the violin, and then pass on to the Viola when she is big enough and sufficiently firmly knit to stand the strain of the larger, heavier instrument. There is next to no demand for solo work unless a player is a "star".
Violoncello The cello is an exceedingly useful instrument and not overstocked with first rate players like the violin; it is needed in almost every kind of ensemble or orchestral organization, and its only drawback seems to be that it is cumbersome to take about and has to have a railway of its own.

Double Bass Very few women play the Double Bass. It is almost entirely an orchestral instrument and though easier to play than the cello its size is portentous. ("Bill, do you think that's Elijah?" as one street arab said to another when he saw a double Bass being carried into Birmingham Town Hall for the first per-



formance of Mendelssohn's "Elijah" in 184)

Wood-Wind Instruments Up to a short time ago it was rare for girls to learn the Flute, Oboe, Clarinet and Bassoon and the few who became proficient found extraordinary difficulty in getting good class work. But of late both supply and demand are increasing, and the British Women's Symphony Orchestra is a sign of the times.

Brass The heavier wind instruments, - trumpet, Horn, trombone, tuba, etc are almost entirely in the hands of men. Few women play them, and still fewer play them well. The type of work open too, is usually poor. As a result when the women get a chance in classical music most of them phrase in a slipshod way

Other instruments The Harp has already been spoken of : it is the one instrument in which women more than hold their own.

The Kettle Drums require a first rate musician with unshakeable nerve, accuracy and good wrists. Drums are really hard to play well, and opportunities for first class work are mainly filled by men.

The other percussion instruments are easier, but from the point of view of a career there is not money in them. No one should undertake them who cannot count bars in long rests.

Other branches of the Musical profession include those of composer, and Conductor (both very stern and honourable and difficult careers to make good in) Lectures on Music, where some highly equipped women-musicians who are good public speakers have



have made niches for themselves, and Musical Journalism, ^{which} ~~where~~ is also a skilled job requires the double qualifications of musical and literary ability and training. One or two women have gone into Music Publishing, but here again the trade is mainly in the hands of men.

This article is not a Bradshaw, not even an A.B.C. to Music as a career. The subject is too big. The most that can be done has been to give general indications and to hope that readers will understand the lists of Musical training centres, openings for work etc are merely typical not exhaustive. In pursuing further enquiries it is an assistance to a girl to belong to one of the great teaching institutions or to be a member of the Society of Women Musicians, London. which exists to give its members the benefits of co-operation and acts as a sort of exchange for all information concerning women's work in music.

In conclusion there are still some bits of advice to give. One is - Never think anything ~~connected~~ with professional work too trivial for attention. A girl should know how to dress well and suitably, how to walk onto a platform, how to stand, how to bow to an audience etc. In fact common sense and imagination must go together.

Another wise counsel is that a girl should read Musical History and plenty of fine general literature to give her a real background of thought for the music she interprets. But above all Character is the thing that counts. Without strength of character and artistic integrity the most brilliant gifts may come to

nothing. Though Battles were the immediate business of Sir Francis Drake, what he wrote may well stand as a motto for musicians, "There must be a beginning to any great matter, but the continuing unto the end until it be thoroughly finished yields the true glory" But it was Beethoven, the General of the Musicians who said "Nulla dies sine linea"

